

When a Student Misses a Skill: Re-teaching Strategies

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Introduction:

Reteaching is a vital skill, which must be planned for as part of an effective instructional cycle. Some learners will not master learning objectives during the first introduction to new knowledge and need other opportunities to engage with their content. Planning for diverse opportunities to learn, and even to remediate multiple times, will provide struggling learners the opportunities they need to master their required grade level content. “For reteaching to be effective, however, teachers must use a different approach from the one they initially used, one that builds on previous activities but that focuses on the omissions or errors in student thinking that resulted from these activities” (Marzano, 2010). To ensure that reteaching is most effective, teachers should use student assessment data to plan new instruction, which targets the lowest areas of content mastery from prior teaching. Three strategies, which often yield excellent reteaching results for these targeted areas are small group project learning, 21st century video modules, and three-to-one (or smaller) pull-out chunking.

Small Group Project Learning

An excellent strategy for students, who fail to master a new skill in a unit, is to have those students collaborate and create a project which they can use to teach that skill to others (perhaps younger learners). The process of researching and preparing a lesson for other learners (becoming an expert on the skill) often helps learners to master the content by engaging with material in a completely different way--and a much deeper level--than they did during their original lesson. Students may also find success by reading content and videos, which explain their content at a more accessible level: “Whenever I need more time with a concept, I read a dummy-downed

version of the concept. This means I start with a middle school textbook prior to delving into primary source documents, college resources, and sometimes even my college textbooks. Do the same with students, give them a pared down version of the text and help them make sense of it with guided reading activities” (Savvy Strategy, 2013). If students struggle to master a concept during general instruction with grade-level materials, then lower instructional content and time to collaborate with peers on a teaching project for younger learners or peers may help them master their learning goals the second time around.

21st Century Video Module

Elementary teachers have used centers to reteach struggling learners for years, but this method of reteaching is rarely used in later grades. Robert Marzano explains how elementary teachers use centers: “Centers are self-paced instructional packets or learning stations featuring planned activities set up around the classroom that students can work their way through to better understand specific content” (2010). Elementary teachers generally plan center time when students can ALL engage at a center of one form or another, including accelerated centers for advanced learners. The problem with centers is they take time to create, and they take space in a room. To avoid both problems, 21st century teachers can update the concept of centers and have struggling students complete video modules when they fail to master learning objectives. A multitude of pre-existing videos on almost ANY learning objective already exist, eliminating the need to create most learning modules in the 21st century. Youtube, Ted Talks, and other online streaming sources already provide educational learning modules that most busy teachers would need, not to mention remediation software, which many districts purchase for their teachers to use as a supplement for each learning objective. Using existing materials to create 21st century learning modules and then creating original modules when materials don’t exist can allow any grade level teacher to bring the concept of centers into the 21st century and help individual learners master their learning objectives individually after their classmates have moved on.

Small Group Chunking

While most teachers consider chunking to be a pre-teaching or first-time strategy, I like to use chunking for reteaching. Under traditional chunking, a teacher would divide learning standards into small chunks, teach a few pieces, and assess students' understanding of those small pieces to ensure they have learned (Marzano, 2010). If students have failed to master material, then teachers should stop, reteach, and assess again before moving on (ibid). I use chunking in this manner, but I use it for remediation at the end of a unit, as well. When assessment data provides a list of remediation standards, which students have failed to master at the end of a unit, I take those learning targets and chunk them together for specific groups of students. I use those standard clusters to create my cooperative group seating chart for the next unit of instruction in my class, and then I can plan remediation for each group based on their failed standards from the previous unit. I have physical groups in my room with learning chunks, which are unique for their table. So when we have group activities, I can come to each table and remind them that they have a unique remediation standard, which they must consider throughout the unit and continue to document growth toward as we continue to learn our new standards. This is a different form of chunking, but it works, and it helps students create unique connections between their prior learning and their new standards. Sometimes these team remediation connections are the keys to their mastery.

[A Great Video on Using Data to Drive Reteaching](#)

[How One School is Using Reteaching in Elementary Math](#)

[Reteaching in Small Groups](#)